

# Occupational Wages

Few Utah labor market statistics elicit as much interest in the general public as occupational wages estimates. Their annual release, coinciding with the release of similar data nationwide, provokes thoughtful inquiries as well as some hair pulling—usually when looking at our data and then at your paycheck. For this year's release we want to examine the data from a number of angles in order to give you a better picture of how we arrive at these figures and what they mean.

## The Wisdom of Crowds

Occupational wage information comes from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey of the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). For Utah, the OES survey covers roughly 3,500 establishments and is conducted by the Department of Workforce Services (DWS). With the data that is returned by employers, the BLS and DWS create statistical estimates of wages for more than 600 different occupations. The idea being that by taking a snapshot of occupations across the economy we will end up with estimated wage rates that are representative of the "going wage rate" in the economy.

So there are really two important points to take here: one, this data is collected from a survey, thus the results can deviate from reality for all the reasons a survey can be flawed (who hasn't fibbed when filling out a survey?); and two, since we use a survey there is a considerable time lag involved between gathering, cleaning, processing, and publishing the data. Even

with these two challenges, the data published here is the best and most comprehensive wage information available in the nation.

## Making Numbers Talk

Of course, there are a number of ways to interpret the wage data. One, which we alluded to previously, is simply to look up the wage of a particular occupation and compare it to what you make. You can also look at the top ten and bottom ten paying occupations in the state—this seems to be popular with the media. However, there are other ways to slice and dice the data that can be quite revealing.

For example, one interesting story that leaps from the data is how certain occupations are paid over different industries. For example, executive secretaries and administrative assistants work in nearly every industry, but they are paid very differently in each. The latest data shows that executive secretaries in support services for mining are the best paid of all secretaries, with an average annual pay of \$51,920. Those working in furniture and related product manufacturing were the least well off, making on average \$31,740 a year. However, other occupations didn't witness such a spread. General office clerks posted a high average annual wage of \$27,790 in computer and electronic product manufacturing and a low of \$18,370 in performing arts, spectator sports and related industries.

## You're in the Driver's Seat

With the release of the latest OES data, you are truly put in the driver's seat. From our web site you can compare and contrast wages between occupations and different geographies here in Utah. Curious what the market is paying on average for your occupation? Want to know what your competitors may be paying their workers? The information is at your fingertips. ⓘ

## Resources

- Utah Occupational Wages:  
<http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoOccwage.do>



## Top Ten and Bottom Ten Occupations by Wage in Utah

 Occupation	Hourly Mean	Hourly Median	Annual Mean	Annual Median	Typical Education Required
Chief Executives	\$72.49		\$150,770		Bachelor's plus experience
Dentists, General	\$62.01	\$55.13	\$128,980	\$114,680	First professional degree
Lawyers	\$54.58	\$44.87	\$113,520	\$93,330	First professional degree
Optometrists	\$51.08	\$44.51	\$106,250	\$92,580	First professional degree
Engineering Managers	\$49.77	\$48.41	\$103,520	\$100,680	Bachelor's plus experience
Pharmacists	\$48.29	\$48.88	\$100,440	\$101,670	First professional degree
Sales Managers	\$47.60	\$41.61	\$99,000	\$86,540	Bachelor's plus experience
Computer and Information Systems Managers	\$45.53	\$43.40	\$94,700	\$90,260	Bachelor's plus experience
Physicists	\$44.91	\$42.72	\$93,420	\$88,850	Doctoral degree
Human Resources Managers, All Other	\$44.27	\$39.85	\$92,070	\$82,890	Bachelor's plus experience
 Occupation	Hourly Mean	Hourly Median	Annual Mean	Annual Median	Typical Education Required
Lifeguards, Ski Patrol, and Other Recreational Protective Service Workers	\$7.95	\$7.52	\$16,550	\$15,640	Short-term on-the-job training
Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	\$7.92	\$7.75	\$16,480	\$16,130	Short-term on-the-job training
Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants and Bartender Helpers	\$7.92	\$7.35	\$16,470	\$15,290	Short-term on-the-job training
Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers, All Other	\$7.89	\$7.72	\$16,420	\$16,060	Short-term on-the-job training
Ushers, Lobby Attendants, and Ticket Takers	\$7.82	\$7.72	\$16,260	\$16,050	Short-term on-the-job training
Dishwashers	\$7.70	\$7.73	\$16,020	\$16,080	Short-term on-the-job training
Cooks, Fast Food	\$7.69	\$7.36	\$16,000	\$15,320	Short-term on-the-job training
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	\$7.58	\$7.30	\$15,770	\$15,180	Short-term on-the-job training
Counter Attendants, Cafeteria, Food Concession, and Coffee Shop	\$7.57	\$7.23	\$15,740	\$15,030	Short-term on-the-job training
Baggage Porters and Bellhops	\$7.40	\$6.99	\$15,390	\$14,530	Short-term on-the-job training

Source: Occupational Employment Statistics, 2007, Utah Department of Workforce Services.